

The Book Club of California  
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Founded in 1912, The Book Club of California is a non-profit organization of book lovers and collectors who have a special interest in Pacific Coast history, literature, and fine printing. Its chief aims are to further the interests of book collectors and to promote an understanding and appreciation of fine books.

The Club is limited to 1,000 members. When vacancies exist, membership is open to all who are in sympathy with its aims and whose applications are approved by the Board of Directors. Regular membership involves no responsibilities beyond payment of the annual dues. Dues date from the month of the member's election. Regular membership is \$55; Sustaining \$75; Patron \$150.

Members receive the *Quarterly News-Letter* and all parts of the current Keepsake series. They have the privilege, but not the obligation, of buying Club publications, which are limited, as a rule, to one copy per member. Members may purchase extra copies of Keepsakes or *News-Letters*, when available. Membership dues (less \$17.50 in each membership category) and donations, including books, are deductible in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code.

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## *The Book Club of California: The Founding Years*

Joanne Sonnichsen

1912 must have been an exhilarating time in which to have lived in San Francisco. The city was rising from the devastating effects of the 1906 earthquake and fire. The corrupt administration rampant at the turn of the century had been turned out in favor of men of integrity. The promises of increased economic activity, to be brought about by the completion of the Panama Canal, must have made men of vision believe that anything was possible.

In one sense, the building of the Panama Canal was to lead — not only from one sea to another — but also to the founding of The Book Club of California. A wonderful exposition was being planned to celebrate the completion of the Canal and to show the new and formidable San Francisco to the world. A group of San Francisco bibliophiles felt that the Exposition should include a display of fine books.

They approached Charles Moore, president of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Moore suggested to them that the proposition would be more charitably heard if it were to come from an organization rather than simply a group of interested men. They withdrew to lunch, and, by the time coffee had been served, the decision to form The Book Club of California had been made.

For whatever reason, they concentrated their efforts not on the Exposition but on the development of their fledgling organization. The book arts were represented at the Pan-Pacific Exposition by an exhibition of fine hand book-bindings, but that was organized by another group.

Any records of this lunch doubtless were kept only in the heads of those present. One could hazard a guess, however, that the luncheon group included Albert Bender, Dr. Edward Robeson Taylor, W.R.K. Young, and John Henry Nash, all men of ability whose unique perspectives were to mold the develop-



ment of The Book Club of California. John Henry Nash was a fine printer. W.R.K. Young, who managed C & H Sugar, was also a collector of fine bindings. Will Sparks, a noted California painter, might also have joined them. But the strongest influences in the group were Albert Bender and Dr. Edward Robeson Taylor.

Dr. Taylor was the oldest member. Born in Springfield, Illinois, on September 24, 1838, he was now an active seventy-eight years of age. His family had moved to Boonville, Missouri, where he graduated from the Kemper School. He started to work for the local newspaper, the *Observer*, where he learned to set type, did some reporting, and soon acquired a part interest in the paper. Early in the Civil War, as the pro-Confederate state militia neared town, Taylor, fearing he would be forced to print for them, buried all of the newspaper's type. When the Confederate major arrived, he demanded that Taylor print a broadside. Taylor said he couldn't because there was no type. The major learned that Taylor had buried the type and ordered him to divulge its location. Taylor refused, and the officer had him strung up so that just his toes touched the floor. After twenty minutes, the rope was slackened, and the officer again demanded the location. They strung him up a second time, this time for fifteen seconds. Taylor finally divulged the location of the type but still refused to print. When, in the following year, Frémont established martial law, Taylor felt his future lay in a less restrictive

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location, and he set off for California. He chose the route via the Mississippi River to New Orleans, and from there to the east coast of Panama. After crossing Panama by train, he took a ship from the west coast and landed in San Francisco on February 4, 1862. He was then twenty-three years old.

From San Francisco, Taylor went to Sacramento, where he started work as a typesetter. During that period he met Henry George. When George later wrote *Progress and Poverty*, Taylor read both the manuscript and all proofs of it. Soon, however, Taylor found the perfect job for a young man with ambition – that of purser on a river steamer going between Sacramento and San Francisco. The job was ideal, not from the standpoint of a life's work, but from the standpoint of the people with whom he would come into contact: Leland and Josiah Stanford, Henry Haight, Dr. Hugh Hugher Toland, who was to inspire the next phase of his life, and other statesmen and politicians. In 1863, Taylor entered the Medical Department of the University of the Pacific, then, in November of 1864, became a member of the first class of Toland Medical College, graduating in December, 1865 – obviously, medicine was less complicated then.

Although the theory of medicine was of interest to Taylor, the practice was not. In 1867 he accepted the position of secretary to then-Governor Henry Haight. In 1870 he married Agnes Stanford, Leland Stanford's niece (a marriage that lasted until her death, in 1906). Taylor became engrossed in the study of the law and passed the Bar in January, 1872. He joined ex-Governor Haight in the San Francisco law firm of Haight and Taylor.

He met the noted artist William Keith in 1878, when they were both thirty-nine years old, and they became lifelong friends. He would often spend time with Keith in his studio, which was just a block from Taylor's San Francisco office. In later years, Taylor acquired several of Keith's paintings. Had Keith not died in 1911, he would undoubtedly have played an important role in the founding of The Book Club.

Taylor began to be publicly noticed in the early 1880s because of his successful arguments in Washington, D.C., against the adoption of the Stratton Survey – the adoption of which would have disrupted land settlements throughout the area. From 1891 to 1899 he served as a member of the board of trustees of Stanford University. His reputation continued to grow, and, in 1902, he became Dean of Hastings College of the Law. He kept his law office until it was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire.



In June, 1907, after Mayor Schmitz had been convicted of extortion and of accepting bribes, and after two equally suspect supervisors had both been turned out as Mayor, Taylor was approached, and he reluctantly agreed to run for the office. He was nearly sixty-nine, but accepted the position, naming his own terms, the most firm of which was that he was to be completely independent. In November, 1907, he was elected Mayor for a two-year term. When asked to run again in 1909, he refused.

In 1908, a few months after his sixty-ninth birthday, he married Eunice Jeffers, who was then twenty-seven. The discrepancy in their ages caused a good deal of comment, but the marriage lasted until the death of Dr. Taylor.

As a lawyer, he might have resembled Rumpole of the Bailey a bit, for Taylor was fond of quoting poetry – often his own – in and out of court. If the law was Taylor's vocation, finely written and crafted books were one of his avocations. In addition to composing his own poetry, Taylor did such a fine job of translating the *Sonnets* of José-Maria de Heredia from the French that, according to his son, Edward, "the French decorated him with a ribbon as a result."<sup>1</sup> He was trustee of both Lane Medical Library and the San Francisco Public Library. Both his sons from his first wife became printers. With John Henry Nash, they formed the firm of Taylor, Nash and Taylor. When Nash left, it became Taylor & Taylor.

Albert Bender hadn't yet been born when Taylor was being strung up in Missouri. Born on June 18, 1866, the eldest of five children of a Dublin rabbi, Bender followed brief schooling in Dublin with study at an academy in southwest England. He left Ireland for San Francisco in 1883 at the age of sixteen. He began as a clerk, then, in 1895, was taken into partnership with his uncle (with whom he had come west). The firm was called Bremer & Bender, General Insurance Agents. In 1902, he formed his own company: Albert M. Bender, Insurance and Oil Broker. In 1906, as the demands for payment for damages from the earthquake and fire were being settled, the firm's reputation for helpfulness, integrity, and efficiency grew, as did that of Albert Bender himself. In 1911 he was part of the Grand Jury of San Francisco. He was forty-five when The Book Club of California was formed.

Given his business acumen, it is almost surprising to find that Albert Bender was also a central part of the arts community. Unlike Taylor, who wrote and translated poetry, or Keith, a fine artist, Bender did not practice any of the arts, but he was their enthusiastic audience and an unparalleled supporter of the

arts. He was not wealthy, but, as a bachelor with few personal needs, he gave his energy and enthusiasm to promoting the work of artists and book makers. He was an avid collector of fine press books and of fine bookbinding. One could say that in this world, too, he was a mover and shaker. Oscar Lewis described him this way: "He stood only an inch or two above 5 feet, his features inclined more toward strength than symmetry, and long before he was 60 his never-abundant hair had thinned to the point where only a few stands remained to be carefully brushed over an all but barren skull. Moreover, he suffered the added indignity of a speech impediment. This was a perverse sort of stammer that ordinarily caused him no inconvenience but was likely to keep him silent at moments when he most wanted to be heard. His manner was ever friendly and warm, there was a permanent twinkle in his eye, and when he smiled – which was often – it was the smile of one who thoroughly enjoyed life and who assumed you were enjoying it too."<sup>2</sup>

Michael Ryan best described his influence on the community: "Bender's generosity was and is legendary. Lacking children himself, he adopted young artists and fledgling institutions and encouraged them to develop and prosper. He sought to disseminate culture rather than hoard it, and he spread his wealth around wisely and with thought. He created contexts and started traditions. Above all, he created communities; he brought people together in a common spirit and shared enterprise. More than his gifts per se, these traditions, contexts, and communities were Bender's real legacy to the Bay Area...."<sup>3</sup> This life and legacy of Albert Bender will be explored in an exhibition planned for 1998 by the California Historical Society.

William Randolph Kiltie Young, manager of C & H Sugar in 1912, was an ardent bibliophile. Born in January of 1865 on Prince Edward Island, Canada, he was almost forty-eight when The Book Club was founded. For years he had been interested both in fine printing and fine bookbinding. In 1909 he joined the French *Société du Livre Moderne* (The Modern Book Club), and encouraged some of his friends to join also. The head of that organization was Charles Meunier, a French bookbinder whom Young had met when Meunier visited San Francisco shortly after the fire. He was also in contact with Cobden-Sanderson, the British bookbinder, feminist, and printer whose teaching not only had a great influence on American bookbinders but also helped women binders become accepted as fine-binding designers.



Undoubtedly, Young had been aware of the California bookbinder Belle McMurtry before she, too, became one of the charter members of The Book Club. His deepening interest in her became obvious when, in 1915, he ordered from Cobden-Sanderson a copy of his *Credo*. (Two years earlier he had ordered one for Albert Bender.) Before the two were married, in May of 1923, she bound, as a gift for him, a copy of a book printed by John Henry Nash.

Belle McMurtry fits into the full history of The Book Club of California in another way. Although she graduated from Stanford in history in 1899, and was thus an undergraduate when Taylor was a trustee, she soon became interested in fine bookbinding, beginning her studies in San Francisco with Octavia Holden and then continuing her binding studies in France. Belle McMurtry is the beginning of an unbroken line of Bay Area bookbinders binding with the French methods that continues to this day. One of her students, Florence Walter, became the first woman to be president of The Book Club of California, from 1952 to 1955. The second woman to be president, Leah Wollenberg, who also studied with Mrs. Young, served from 1975 to 1977. I am the third, and though I was not fortunate enough to have met Belle McMurtry Young, I am fortunate to be a part of that succession.

California painting was represented in the founding of The Book Club by Will Sparks. Sparks was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1862. Although he sold his first picture at the age of twelve, he spent from 1882 to 1884 at the St. Louis Medical College, majoring in anatomy. His family sent him to Paris in that year, where he studied at the Academy Julian and where he was associated with the important French painters of that period. While in Paris, he worked for Louis Pasteur and as an anatomical artist. Sparks returned to St. Louis, where he met Mark Twain, who encouraged him to go to California.

Sparks moved to California in 1888, first to Fresno, where he worked as a reporter and illustrator on the *Fresno Evening Expositor*, and where, it is said, he performed his only medical practice, treating an occasional knife or gunshot wound. From there he went to the *Stockton Mail*, and, finally, in 1891, he settled in San Francisco with the *Evening Call*. He became a member of the San Francisco Art Association in 1894, and from 1904 to 1908 he was a member of the faculty of the University of California Affiliated Colleges and "made anatomical studies for the school, the teachers and students.... After the fire and earthquake of 1906, Sparks restored many paintings damaged at the time. Most of this work was done at his studio at the college."<sup>4</sup> In 1907 he, along with



William Keith, was one of the founders of the Del Monte Art Gallery. In San Francisco both he and Keith exhibited at Gump's and Vickery, Atkins & Torrey. He joined the Bohemian Club in 1908. By 1912, when he was fifty years of age, his reputation as an artist was secure.

John Henry Nash was born in Ontario, Canada, in 1871 and at forty-one was the youngest of the founding group. Norman Strouse, who had the definitive collection of Nash material, wrote a superb article about Nash for The Book Club's *Quarterly News-Letter*.<sup>5</sup> According to Strouse, Nash's father wanted him to be a mechanical engineer, but Nash threatened to run away unless he could become a printer. At sixteen he was placed in a foundry, and a year later was apprenticed to a printing firm in Toronto. Shortly afterward he took off for two or three years to become a professional bicycle racer, traveling over much of Canada and the United States. He came to San Francisco in 1895 and joined a local printing firm, soon becoming foreman. In 1903 he joined with Paul Elder in the founding of the Tomoye Press, which produced books to sell through Paul Elder's bookshop. The Press was damaged in the fires of 1906, and Nash moved to New York. His work from the Tomoye Press was exhibited there in 1907 and established him as one of the foremost American printers. He returned to San Francisco in 1909 and in 1911 joined the firm run by Edward Robeson Taylor's two sons, which became Taylor, Nash, and Taylor. As Strouse puts it, "Nash was still a restless and difficult partner and left Taylor, Nash & Taylor in 1915."

Although none of these men had the idea they would be forming a formidable institution when they left home that morning, they formed a group well suited to the work that lay ahead of them. All were successful in their chosen fields. Three were businessmen with an artistic bent, two were artists. None were native to California, but they all had a love for their adopted home. Their other interests overlapped: Both Taylor and Sparks had studied medicine but did not practice it; Taylor, Bender, and Sparks worked actively on restoration after the fire, although in different areas; Taylor, Young, and Sparks were involved in French culture, and all three were members of the Bohemian Club; and Bender, Taylor, and Young were interested in the art of bookbinding. And best of all, they all had a devoted interest in beautiful books.

The organizing meeting for The Book Club of California was held on December 11, 1912, at the Commercial Club, then at 133 Kearny Street. Taylor served as President, Young as Vice-President, Bender as Treasurer, and

Sparks as Secretary. The remaining members were James D. Blake, a publisher's representative, Alfred Sutro, attorney and bibliophile, who was to become president of The Book Club from 1925 to 1945, Isaac O. Upham, a merchant and fellow Bohemian, and Mrs. Laurence Maynard, a "civic leader." Regularly scheduled monthly Board meetings were planned. Will Sparks was asked to design the Club emblem. Within a month the Constitution and By-laws were drafted and approved.

With such a group, it is not surprising to find that the Constitution states the purposes of The Club as "the study of letters and the promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books. These objects shall comprehend the occasional publication of books designed to illustrate, promote and encourage letters and book production...and for the holding of meetings, lectures, exhibitions and entertainments of whatever kind falling within the purposes of the Club."<sup>6</sup> The San Francisco Bay Area has had a rich heritage of fine printers, and they and The Book Club of California have worked together to their mutual benefit since the founding of The Club.

The following month, February of 1913, they set the Annual Meeting for March 24, resolved to hold an exhibition of bookplates at Vickery, Atkins and Torrey in April, changed their meeting site to the Phelan Building, discussed publication of a bibliography of California history, and made their presence known nationally by sending copies of their By-laws to the Grolier Club in New York and the Caxton Club and Brothers of the Book in Chicago. At the Board Meeting following the Annual Meeting, the interim officers, Taylor, Young, Bender, and Sparks, were duly elected.

In June, 1913, the Board approved the selection of its first publication: A bibliography of books dealing with the history of California and the American Pacific West from the earliest writings on the subject to the San Francisco fire of 1906.

The first lecture sponsored by The Club was given on the evening of April 30, 1913, in conjunction with its first exhibition. The subject was bookplates. Reverend W.A. Brewer, who had lent many of the examples from his collection, delivered a lecture on the subject in the Green Room of the St. Francis Hotel.

Within a year, there were fifty-eight charter members of The Book Club, including such familiar personages as historian Robert Cowan, Morgan Gunst, Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, John Howell, bookbinder Belle McMurtry, book-



seller John Newbegin, Alfred and Oscar Sutro, and Dr. Taylor's two printer sons, Edward DeWitt and Henry H. Taylor.

At the second Annual Meeting, in 1914, a new member of the Board was elected who was to have great importance to The Club: Oscar Lewis. At the Board Meeting directly afterwards, Dr. Taylor, now eighty years old, became Honorary President. William R.K. Young took over as President, Alfred Sutro became Vice-President, James D. Blake became Secretary, and Bender remained as Treasurer. That group was to stay intact until 1925.

In April of 1914, The Book Club sponsored its second exhibition, again at the galley of Vickery, Atkins and Torrey. This was an exhibition of fine book-bindings. Among the twenty lenders to the exhibition were Charles Crocker, Phoebe Hearst, John Howell, Belle McMurtry, Dr. Taylor, and W.R.K. Young.

The Pan Pacific Exhibition appears briefly in the minutes of 1914 in the form of an invitation to members of the Bibliophile Society of Boston to visit San Francisco and the Exhibition, and to assure them of The Club's welcome and offer to be of service during their stay.

The first publication of The Book Club of California was *A Bibliography of California and the Pacific West, 1510-1906*. The publication committee, composed of Nash, Young, and bookseller James Blake, gave three compelling reasons for their choice: The first, that no complete bibliography had been done, the checklists to the works of Bancroft and others being considered inadequate for research. The second was that the opportunity for thoroughness and completeness in getting the desired data together would never be more favorable than at that time. To quote from the minutes: "Each passing year witnesses the destruction of historical material."<sup>7</sup> The third reason, again quoting from the minutes, was that "the committee, while fully aware of the desirability of making beautiful reprints of classic works, is convinced that such action can well be deferred until the duty of crystallizing the rapidly disappearing data concerning the history of the Pacific States shall have been performed." Robert E. Cowan was recommended to create the text. On the basis of a sample book made with hand-made paper, Goudy's Kennerly hand-set type, hand-sewn onto tapes, and with a hard cover, the decision was made to publish two hundred and fifty copies, the price per volume to be \$20.00. Each member would be permitted to purchase two copies. Bender describes funding for early publications in an article in the *Quarterly News-Letter*: "There were long periods when the Club by no stretch of the imagination could be said to be rolling in wealth, and the mat-

ter of financing the publications and of selling them afterwards presented real problems. It was then that the early members gave frequent and substantial evidence of their interest. When a new publication was planned, members of the committee made the rounds, explained the project, and departed with orders for more copies than the men visited were ever likely to use, and with their check in full payment. During the first dozen years of the Club's existence practically all its publications were financed in that manner. Without such cooperation it would have been impossible to continue the publishing program. If the history of our little organization is ever written credit to this group of early supporters should not be withheld, for by their help alone was it able to survive the precarious first years."<sup>8</sup> Bender himself was one of that group. In addition to his own copy he would order for the Bay Area libraries on his donation list and for the library in Dublin.

By 1915, the activities of The Club were in full swing. Mr. Edwin Markham lectured in May on "The Purpose of Poetry," J.B. Havre in October on "The Ancient Civilization of the Andean Plateau of Peru and Bolivia," and Edgar Walter in December on "Art Topics." Two new publications were planned, and T.J. Cobden-Sanderson (at that time printer for William Morris's Doves Press) was made an honorary member. Young had been in contact with Cobden-Sanderson for a few years and later, in 1919, sent him a copy of The Book Club's *Kasidah*.

After the publication of the *Bibliography*, the committee proposed its next two books: *The Man with the Hoe*, by Edwin Markham, and three short stories by Bret Harte, both of which were printed by John Henry Nash. William H. Crocker, who owned the Millet painting that had inspired Markham's poem, generously permitted The Club to photograph the painting so that a copy could be included in each book. Markham had obviously re-studied his poem and, for this publication, changed the word "menace" to "danger" so that the (abridged) phrase now reads, "There is no shape more terrible than this – More fraught with *danger* to the universe." The illustrator for this volume is not named, but I am certain he was the same person who illustrated the Bret Harte book that followed: Ray F. Coyle.

A vignette by Coyle introduced each of the three Bret Harte tales, "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," and "Tennessee's Partner." The bindings for the two books, which were published in 1916, were similar, blue boards with a linen spine.



By April of 1916 the administration of Club affairs had grown to the point where it was necessary to appoint a secretary. In November the Board authorized a medallion, a smaller version of The Club's bas-relief, to be given to Markham as an expression of appreciation. Other medallions were awarded to several recipients in later years, including one, in 1917, to Belle McMurtry.

There were three publications in 1917. The first was *Thirty-Five Sonnets* by George Sterling. This had decorations by the noted type designer Frederic Goudy and was printed by Taylor & Taylor. The second was *Vision of Mizrah* by Joseph Addison, printed by John Henry Nash. The third was *Nationalism* by Sir Rabindranath Tagore.

*California: A Poem* by Ina Coolbrith, the first of two publications in 1918, was printed by John Henry Nash. Taylor & Taylor printed the second, *Odes and Sonnets* by Clark Ashton Smith. In February, Albert Bender suggested that The Club might want to publish Sir Richard Burton's *Kasidah*, a book they had considered earlier, and work got underway.

*Kasidah, A Lay of the Higher Law*, translated and annotated by Sir Richard Burton, was the only book published in 1919, but it was an exceptional publication. Aurelia Reinhardt wrote the introduction, and Dan Sweeney did the decorations. John Henry Nash was the printer. The binding had French marbled boards with an antique vellum spine, even though that added \$600.00 to the production cost. The text featured a French handmade paper and Caslon Old-Style type, hand set. Copy Number 1 was presented to Dr. Taylor.

John Henry Nash printed two of the three volumes of 1920, both illustrated by Coyle. The first was a collection of three short stories by Ambrose Bierce, the second, *The Vintage Festival* by Sara Bard Field. *Lilith*, by George Sterling, was printed by Taylor & Taylor.

The exhibition for 1920 was of Rare Books and Fine Bindings, held at the Bohemian Club the last two weeks of May. In June, Bender reported that it was liberally attended and was to be regarded at the most successful exhibition ever held by The Club.

In 1921, The Book Club sent a letter to the Tariff Committee in Washington, placing itself on record as opposed to the proposed tariff on the importation of books into the United States. That same year, Oscar Lewis agreed to act as executive secretary for four months, probably little thinking that this would lead to a later appointment that would last until 1945 and a life-long association with The Book Club.

The appearance of Oscar Lewis on the scene begins a new stage of development for The Book Club of California, that of the Oscar Lewis years. Let us hope that someone who knew him will take up the history from that point.

Now, nearly eighty-five years later, The Book Club of California has flourished. It has its own club rooms, with a superb library of the arts of the book and a collection of more than two hundred titles of its own publications. The Book Club of California still has an exhibition program, and still sponsors public programs, both now much more active than in the early years. New activities, such as the *Quarterly News-Letter* and an annual series of Keepsakes, both begun in 1933, belong to the next chapter.

In late fall of 1996 we come full circle with our publications program. *The Gold Rush Bibliography*, written by Gary Kurutz, over 800 pages in length, contains 807 titles, or 1,108 items. William Reese, the celebrated dealer in Americana from New Haven, has commented on this bibliography:

"Gary Kurutz has satisfied this long-standing need in superlative fashion. Its publication is the most important event in Western Americana bibliography since the revised edition of Wagner-Camp appeared in 1982. This book is a must for any book person with an interest in California or the Gold Rush."

The demanding standards established by the founders are being admirably continued.

1. Oral history of Edward DeWitt Taylor. University of California
2. Lewis, Oscar. *To Remember Albert M. (Micky) Bender. Notes for a Biography*. With an appreciation by Elise S. Haas. San Francisco: Grabhorn-Hoyem, 1973
3. Ryan, Michael T. *The Coming of the Book Arts to The Farm*. San Francisco: Roxburghe-Zamorano keepsake, 1992
4. James, Charles Sexton. *Will Sparks 1862-1937*. Manuscript at the California Historical Society
5. Strouse, Norman H. "John Henry Nash: A Collector's Reappraisal." *Quarterly News-Letter*. San Francisco: The Book Club of California, Volume XLII, Number 3, Summer 1982. Page 59
6. *Quarterly News-Letter*. San Francisco: The Book Club of California. Volume LIII, Number 3 Summer 1988. Page 68
7. Minutes of Board meetings. Archives of The Book Club of California
8. *Quarterly News-Letter*, Volume v, Number 3, December 1937



Joanne Sonnichsen, well known as a designer-bookbinder, is President of The Book Club of California and active in international book circles.



## *Pixley of Pixley: An Artesian Spring in the Valley*

David C. Weber

When The Club published in 1989 a book entitled *Frank Morrison Pixley of The Argonaut*, well researched by author John L. Levinsohn, it sketched the remarkable career of a formidable Californian politician. The book's subtitle may seem to imply it was but a commentary on the editorship of this very famous newspaper, yet in fact, only one fourth of it concerns Pixley's editorship of *The Argonaut*. The book gives us much more of this forceful, bold muckraker, author, publisher, and entrepreneur who invaded the San Joaquin Valley, aided railroad development south toward Bakersfield, and helped flowers grow and buildings spring up near an extraordinary artesian well in that region. What is this surprising dimension of the story of a real Californian character?

Frank Pixley was exceptional for his governmental service in the period 1851 to 1890. He was one of the '49er gold miners, working in El Dorado County and then in Plumas County on the North Fork of the Yuba River. He served later as a regent of the University of California, member of the Yosemite National Park Board, trustee of the State Mining Bureau, park commissioner of San Francisco, manager of The Bank of San Francisco, and California's State Attorney General under Governor Leland Stanford. He served as state assemblyman. He seconded the nomination of James G. Blaine as candidate for the presidency of the United States.

And was this man feisty? Indeed, he fought many a newspaper battle. One series of jousts led him into the fire, or at least to carry a firearm for his colleague. At age thirty-one, Pixley was "second" in a famous 1856 duel, where the opponent was none other than William Walker, the *San Francisco Herald* writer and later popular and notorious Central American filibuster (the word here used as an irregular military adventurer who invades a foreign country to foment a revolution and set up an insurgent government). Walker was wounded in this duel. All this activity and varied engagements took place before or during Pixley's career as illustrious newspaper editor, forceful public speaker, and political commentator.

Bailey Millard, writing in *The San Francisco Bay Region*, said "Pixley probably exerted a more commanding influence upon the public mind of California

in his time than any other man. In his turn he was a lawyer, miner, journalist, politician and capitalist. His voice was heard afar. He made and unmade men." All this may serve to convince us that Frank Pixley was quite a figure, deserving our attention. The Book Club publication covers his entire life, in a lovely design printed by Susan Acker at the Feathered Serpent Press. One should buy this informative and provocative book while a few copies remain.

What is the valley aspect of the Pixley story? The Book Club publication has twelve words on this tiny facet of Frank Morrison Pixley's life, saying that he is recalled "by the town of Pixley (population 800) in the San Joaquin Valley." It leaves this tantalizing comment without explanation. Why a town named after him? Why down there some 270 miles by horse and carriage or railroad from his San Francisco? What are the events which gave birth to this town? Does it still exist? Most of this story can be found in 1939 articles in the *Tulare Times* and *Advance Register*, written by Cora L. Keagle, from which portions of the following are taken.

As background, note that Frank Pixley had a long and close friendship with Charles Crocker and Leland Stanford. When the Central Pacific Railroad was projected and Stanford was made its president, he retained Frank Pixley as his legal advisor for the railroad. This friendship continued until they were both late in life; in *The Argonaut* of June 21, 1884, Pixley reported that his "old-time friend" Leland Stanford had just then told him that he planned to establish "a school for boys and girls at Menlo...."

What was going on in the valley? In 1872 the Southern Pacific Railroad was extended fifteen miles farther south from Tulare, to bring grain up to market. Alternate sections of land along the right of way as far as Bakersfield were given the railroad by the federal government, for two miles on either side of the road. And alternate sections were offered for homesteading to encourage settlement. The road was extended in 1873 down to Bakersfield, opening the 14th of that July and passing a region where a dozen years later a fine artesian well was brought in from 550 feet.

Men drilled for water in Tulare County and found underground strata which were under enough pressure to force water upward without pumping. This artesian belt twenty-five miles long and fifteen miles wide was along the axis of the valley, with over 250 such wells brought in over time. This exceptional source produced a fine flow in Pixley for the next fifty years, 98% pure; the well was soon capped with a reducer, forcing the stream ten feet into the air as a fountain.



Some folk with land interests tried to get the railroad to place a station there. They got nowhere until they persuaded Frank Pixley to come in with them to form the Pixley Townsite Company in 1886 for the purpose of establishing a town on the southeast quarter of Section 32, purchased from a homesteader. The town was named for Pixley because of his legal and financial assistance. That year, Pixley not only persuaded the railroad to put in a station but also to build a \$7,000 three-story hotel, measuring 36 x 70 feet, to be used as a railroad eating house and managed by the Harvey House company. Pixley also influenced Granger's Bank to build a large wheat warehouse (of which Chris Evans, later a notorious bandit, was warehouseman).

The trains would stop for twenty minutes for passengers to eat meals at the hotel. For years, one of the startling sights for train passengers, as the train slowed up at Pixley, was the "monster artesian well a few rods from the track, pouring forth its sparkling flood like a young cataract. It is a pleasant sight to behold and one that is full of promise for Pixley's future."

In the town, Frank Pixley owned a brick building that he named the Argonaut after his newspaper, shared ownership of a general store until he sold his share in 1892, and owned a nearby ranch in the artesian belt. His sister-in-law, Emma Pixley, came with her three sons and daughter to live in the town. She built the first residence in Pixley. She later bought a quarter section to the northwest and leveled 159 acres to grow alfalfa, the first practical use made of the water for irrigation and the first alfalfa planted in the district. One of Emma's sons had a store. Another son had a real estate office, was the first railroad station agent, was a notary public, and represented his uncle Frank's local interests for many years.

Leland Stanford's racing stable trainer was Cy Mulky, whose sister, Mrs. A. Merchant, came to Pixley and bought a ranch just west of town for race horses. Here she built a mile track where the Merchant horses could be trained before entering races in Emeryville. Jane Lathrop Stanford's relatives also became interested in the locality and took a section of railroad land just to the southwest of Pixley (later known as the Schiffman ranch) and developed one of the largest artesian wells in the country. The water flowed so strongly that it had to be capped most of the time. The Lathrop ten-room home was impressive, and the family created "quite a sensation" by having breakfast as late as ten in the morning and a formal dinner every evening – and by reading volumes of poetry to each other even in the middle of the day! The Lathrop house was eventually moved into Pixley and became the Kangaroo Inn.



Map of Pixley region, 1873, the Pixley site being half way between the towns of Tipton and Delano. (From *Report of the Board of Commissioners on the Irrigation of the San Joaquin, Tulare, and Sacramento Valleys. ...* Washington: GPO, 1874.) Courtesy Huntington Library.



By 1888 the depot and warehouse had made Pixley a grain-shipping center for the region. "Great teams with wagons piled high with sacks of grain came from every direction cutting the unimproved roads into hub-deep, dust-filled ruts. It was no unusual sight to see fifty teams waiting for a chance to unload. When the warehouse was filled the grain sacks were piled man high along the railroad tracks to be loaded directly to the cars."

However, 1889 brought more sensational events. First there was the fire which burned the store, followed three years later by the Argonaut building conflagration. And, on February 22nd of 1889, train No. 17 was just leaving town toward Bakersfield when two masked men climbed over the tender to the cab and ordered the engineer to stop two miles south from the station. One curious passenger was seriously wounded and another was killed. After robbing the express car of booty, the robbers fled. An intense search from Tulare to Bakersfield failed to catch them. Other train robberies followed during the next three years. In 1892, when the above-mentioned Chris Evans appeared in Visalia after a long absence, he and George Sontag were suspected. After a shoot-out, the bandits played hide and seek with officers for two years before being captured. Evans had been warehouseman at Pixley during summers and did carpenter work around the country at other seasons. He was "an agreeable, hard working man" but held a grudge against the railroad when he was discharged after years of service as an engineer. This train robbery was the inspiration for one in *The Octopus* by Frank Norris, though Norris added "spectacular details for story value."

The town of Pixley went through hard times during the depression of the 1890s. Frank Morrison Pixley also was having hard times. His health was deteriorating, so much so that when his friend Leland Stanford was selecting the board of trustees for his new university, Pixley was not among them. By 1891 Pixley was too ill to enjoy his beloved Marin County retreat, and moved to sell the farm.

When he died in 1895 at the age of seventy, Frank might also be said to be fighting for his reputation. Many were those who remembered him for the marvelous talented cadre of writers who joined him in making *The Argonaut* so widely read and admired since its founding in 1877. There were also some who hated him for some of his various causes. One of the latter was Ambrose Bierce, Pixley's employee from 1877 to 1879, who left to join *The Wasp* and became his adversary. This long-time merciless critic with the sharp pen added his barb upon Pixley's death with the famous epitaph, "Here lies Frank Pixley — as usual."

In the town of Pixley, dairying supplanted the growing of wheat. In 1908, local real estate boomed when two corporations were formed to grow eucalyptus for furniture, though that fizzled once the trees were found to be of the wrong variety. Invention in 1912 of a new type of wheeled scraper to be used behind a tractor resulted in a very prosperous new Pixley industry which thrived for several years before the factory was moved to Santa Barbara because of a major market there. A decade later, almost overnight in the early 1920s, cotton and migrant workers changed the commercial and social life of Pixley. Today, at age 110, the town of Pixley has a population of 2,488, a branch of the Tulare County Library, and a handsome granite sign erected downtown in 1989, which begins:

ARTESIAN WELLS — At this site and in the close vicinity to the west, several artesian wells were bored which helped in the early development of Pixley. This circular cement watering trough serves as a reminder to us of these wells which supplied Pixley residents and travelers with a refreshing source of water.



David C. Weber is Librarian Emeritus of the Stanford University Libraries.

## *Miniature Book Society Grand Conclave XIV*

It has taken The Miniature Book Society thirteen years to hold its first Grand Conclave in San Francisco, but this year its headquarters were at the Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco, California. (A majority of the members define a miniature book as one having its largest dimension less than three inches.) As usual, Grand Conclave XIV was held over the three-day Labor Day weekend. There were ninety-seven members and families attending from twenty states and five foreign countries. Registration was on Friday afternoon followed by a buffet dinner that evening. The afternoon provided some Book Club of California out-of-town members and former members an opportunity to visit The Club rooms and view the Ward Ritchie exhibit.

Saturday started with a multi-book media workshop conducted by member Ed Hutchins of New York. A sheet of paper, printed on one side, was folded and partially cut, producing a miniature book with numbered pages, but otherwise blank, with a printed paper wrapper and printed title on the spine. At a series of stations, the pages were decorated, embossed, "soap bubble" marbled, and printed with art eraser blocks of individual design, and die-cut cut-outs.

Some conferees took a motorcoach trip to a winery in Sonoma County, and others took in sights and displays in and around San Francisco. The auction of books, donated by members, was held Saturday night. This year, there was a new high in the number of donated items, 185 lots. For collectors of the more than 100 miniature books written by Msgr. Francis J. Weber, there were two of the scarcer titles in the auction, which brought spirited bidding and established a new high, in my memory and price records, for any of that author's books.

The traditional Book Fair began on Sunday, Conclave attendees only in the morning; after lunch, guests and the general public were welcomed to the Fair. The theme of Sunday evening's annual banquet was San Francisco and Chinese lions. Members received awards for service, general excellence, and overall contributions to the Society. Book Awards were given for *Poe, Master of the Macabre*, by P. [Patricia] H. Bellas, published by The Xavier Press, Baltimore; *The Malvern Story*, by J. [Jan] R. Kellett, published by De Walden Press, Malvern [UK]; and *Souvenir of Paris*, published by Left Coast Press. There were forty-two miniature books submitted for judging this year, over one-half of them by non-members of the Society. The guest speaker was Jim Johnson, whose topic was "Biography: The Adventures of Love, and the Love of Adventures."

Monday morning was reserved for the annual business meeting. The annual meeting included a moment of silence for those members who had died during the past year. The organizing committee, the members of the Splendid Press, Susan Acker, Maryline Poole Adams, Carol Cunningham, and Dianne Weiss, was congratulated on an excellent Grand Conclave.

Monday noon, two motor coaches took Conclave attendees to Sausalito. There they were shuttled in a small bus up the hill, and taken, four at a time, in a cable-driven incline car, down to the home of Jane Baird of the Castle Baird Press. For the rest of the afternoon there were lunch, views of the harbor and San Francisco, printing a keepsake on a small self-inking press, and a quiz conducted by Dominic Riley, the Bay Area bookbinder, about book binding tools



(with unrelated tools as decoys), and a demonstration of edge-finishing a book. The Conclave ended with those attendees from Marin County and others driving North leaving from Sausalito, the rest returning to San Francisco by motorcoach.

—John F. Class



John F. Class is a member of The Club's Board of Directors.

## *Serendipity*

*Musings by the Committee Chairman:*

The QN-L enjoys noticing bookish events and books by Club members. Kindly favor us with such news.

The San Francisco Center for the Book had its official grand opening on July 30, 1996, at 300 De Haro Street, San Francisco, 94103(415/565-0545). Directors Mary Austin, Kathleen Burch, and Susan Landauer promise it will be “a home for the book arts community and a site for collaboration and renewal.”

*BIBLIO: The Magazine for Collectors of Books, Manuscripts, and Ephemera* made its debut in July. “I cannot imagine life without books,” declared Amy Knutson, editor of the first two bimonthly issues, introducing what will become a monthly in 1997. Nicholas Basbanes, author of the widely acclaimed *A Gentle Madness*, and Ian McKay, entertaining auction expert, are regular contributors, while Florian Shasky reviewed Gary Kurutz’s forthcoming Gold Rush bibliography in the premier issue. Subscription is \$34.95 for one year, twelve issues, from Astor Publishing Company, P.O. Box 10603, Eugene OR 97440-9940, or telephone 800-840-3810.

Astor Publishing also produces *Mercator’s World*, successor to *The Map Collector*. I picked up the 4th issue at the 16th International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB) Fair – the first time in California in thirty years – on September 7th. “In the end,” says editor Jennifer Lindsey, “collecting is not about acquiring things. It is a passion.” Articles elaborate this theme. Similar in format to *Biblio*, this issue describes collections, portrays fifteen hundred years of maps of Jerusalem, and features its namesake, Gerard Mercator. Subscription to this bimonthly is \$39.95.

The September issue of *Book Source Monthly*, another gleanings from the ILAB fair, states that The Veatchs – Arts of the Book (P.O. Box 328, Northampton MA 01060; (413) 584-1867) will distribute Grolier Club books dating from the 1890s to the present.

The San Francisco Corral of Westerners – a varied group of the historically inclined – has published *Brand Book No. 1* containing eleven presentations from monthly meetings at the Fort Mason Officers Club in 1991. Book Club contributors include Jennifer Larson (forgeries in the antiquarian book world); Dick Dillon (George Yount); Al Shumate (E Clampus Vitus); and Charles Fracchia (Gelett Burgess). *California Vignettes* may be ordered from Bob Schoeppner, 751 Winchester Drive, Burlingame CA 94010, for \$12, plus \$2 postage and handling.

In *On or About December 1910: Early Bloomsbury and Its Intimate World* (Harvard, \$27.95), Book Club director and Stanford historian Peter Stansky exactly pinpoints the emergence of this famed British literary circle within a rich social history of Edwardian England. If you hear Mr. Stansky mumbling “Bunga, Bunga,” this is merely the top-secret code needed to board one of His Majesty’s state-of-the-art battleships.

“HOE CAKE: Half tablespoonful of lard to a pint of cornmeal, one teacup of boiling water; stir well and bake on a hot griddle. Sift in meal one teaspoonful of soda.” Last year, Applewood Books (18 North Road, Bedford MA 01730) offered an eighty-page facsimile of *What Mrs. [Abby] Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking* (1881) – the first cookbook by an African-American. This South Carolinian distilled thirty-five years of experience into 160 recipes to prepare everything from soups, gumbos, and stews, to pastries, pies, and biscuits – and, of course, her award-winning pickles. Readers know from Roger Levenson’s definitive *Women in Printing* (1994) that the San Francisco Women’s Cooperative Printing Union originally produced this pioneering book. Cost: \$8.95, plus \$4 shipping.

Roy Morris, Jr.’s well-received biography, *Ambrose Bierce: Alone in Bad Company* (Crown, \$30), emphasizes the centrality of Bierce’s Civil War combat service to his piercing writings. The Club intends to publish both sides of a correspondence between the acerbic Bierce and poet George Sterling. Once, journalist Bierce summed up a former employer with the mock epitaph: “Here Lies Frank Pixley – As Usual.”

This flamboyant politician, lawyer, and journalist – described as “he of the white hat, immense Roman nasal protuberance, and inexhaustible loquacity in conversation” – is the subject of Book Club publication #190, John Levinsohn’s *Frank Morrison Pixley of The Argonaut* (1989). Copies are available at \$50. Pixley strove to conduct his weekly so that “we can continue in respectable society,” but when it came to politics, he only promised, “We shall be simply ourselves. Sometimes partisan, thoroughly independent, not always consistent, but always honest, and always fearless.” Elsewhere in this issue, David Weber explores Pixley’s connection with the railroad town of Pixley, Tulare County.

In 1878, Ambrose Bierce prattled in *The Argonaut*: “Mr.[I.N.] Choynski, whose antiquarian book-store was twice plundered in one week, says the burglars will probably drive him out of the business. Yes; their competition is sharply felt now in all branches of trade.” At the end of July 1996, San Francisco police arrested two men for shoplifting in-print books throughout California. Police estimated that one made \$6 million over the past ten years reselling them. Ironically, this suspect had pled guilty to receiving stolen books in 1985, but merely received three years probation. Furthermore, the Marin book shop that instigated the investigation after losing \$100,000 annually, had difficulty convincing some law enforcement officials of the seriousness of the crime. The hardest part, said the proprietor, “is seeing your store’s reputation crumble in front of you” after customers cannot find best-sellers shown to be in stock, and publishers wonder why none are ever sold.

As we go to press, Jean and Mike Sherrell, who founded the historical magazine *The Californians* in January 1982, have laid down the quill and composing stick. If there are any Club members with deep pockets who wish to emulate Frank Pixley or Ambrose Bierce, here is your chance. Contact business broker Marcel Oliver at (510)245-8006.

Club member Dudley Cramer’s long-anticipated *The Pecos Ranchers in the Lincoln County War* is hot off Oakland’s Branding Iron Press. With Tom Ryan’s drawings and new information on Billy the Kid and other participants in this 1870s New Mexico feud, Cramer’s work is a must. The 400 numbered and signed hardbacks are \$40, while the soft covers go for \$22.95.

— Dr. Robert J. Chandler



Notes from Down Under: A publishing venture established by the Australian National Maritime Museum and Hordern House, publishers and dealers in rare books and manuscripts of Sydney, Australia, has announced the third of their Australian Maritime Series, *Alexander Dalrymple and His Book*. The series intends to make available facsimiles of important books on Australia and the Pacific, in limited editions and hand-bound in leather. For more information, apply to Hordern House, 77 Victoria Street, Potts Point, Sidney, NSW 2011, Australia; telephone (02) 356-4411; fax(02) 357-3635. The proprietors of Hordern House were most helpful with our publication of David Forbes's *A Pictorial Tour of Hawaii 1850-1852*, and several Club members were delighted to meet them at the ILAB Fair this past September.



To become better acquainted with the life and career of California State Librarian Kevin Starr, see the September 1996 issue of *California Monthly* (the magazine of the California Alumni Association, Berkeley). The absorbing interview was conducted by Charles Wollenberg, fellow historian and fellow member of The Book Club.



George King Fox, long-time Club member, collector of ephemera, and auctioneer-about-town, has taken the newly created position of Director of Marketing at Pacific Book Auction Galleries. Visit Mr. Fox and PBA at their new address, 133 Kearny street, 4th Floor, a short walk from The Book Club.



We note with sadness the death, on August 9, 1996, of Dr. Ann Sproul Speck, long-time member of The Club and generous supporter of its activities.

## Gifts & Acquisitions

*A mea culpa* to Vincent Lozito: Some time ago, Director Lozito presented us with a facsimile of a 19th century horn book he fabricated at his Eagle Press for the Sacramento Book Collectors Club. We failed to thank Vince for this gift, and hasten to do so now. It is a curious and instructive item.



On the evening of June 10, Club member Charles Wollenberg gave an exciting talk on the work of Dorothea Lange in the Bay Area. The title of his talk was *Photographing the Second Gold Rush: Dorothea Lange and the Bay Area at War, 1941-1945*. This is also the title of his recent publication, a copy of which he presented to The Club. This soft-cover book was published by Heyday Books, Berkeley, at \$14.95. This study is not just an insular episode from Lange's noted photography. Wollenberg covers completely the life and work of this amazing woman. All the photographs used for this ninety-page book were chosen by Wollenberg from the collection of prints and negatives owned by the Oakland Museum. The Club is delighted to have this interestingly written work on a great "implanted western" photographer.



Club member Ray Brian has presented us with a fine, clean copy – and in a perfect dust wrapper – of one of Adrian Wilson's first commercial book productions, *The Spice Islands Cook Book*, published by The Lane Book Company (Sunset Books) in 1961. This is also the first appearance by food illustrator Alice Harth, who happily continued for many more years as a *Sunset* food and recipe artist. Thank you, Ray.



Recently we purchased from England a small paper-bound book we missed when it was first published in 1994. This is a choice and necessary item, *The Wood Engravings of Lucien Pissarro & A Bibliographical List of Eragny Books*, by Lora Urbanelli, Silent Books, Swavesey, Cambridge, and The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The books printed by Lucien and Esther Pissarro at their

Eragny Press (1891-1914) were among the most exciting examples of printing, both for the engravings and the color, of all the small private press work that followed in the wake of William Morris.

Unfortunately, the use of offset printing as a medium to reproduce the exquisite color achieved by Pissarro is poor in this modern reproduction – especially since we read that the Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art funded the color plates. This reviewer was particularly annoyed when they tried to reproduce the laid gold leaf with pale orange ink. The book isn't a complete loss; it does reproduce in black and white a good many of Lucien's works as well as a few from his father, Camille. Should any Club member who owns a reasonable run of Eragny books allow us to exhibit them here in our Club rooms, we would be delighted.



Long-time Club member and famed book dealer Glen Dawson has given the library a copy of a most charming book, *Letters to Emily*, designed and printed by the Castle Press of Pasadena and bound by Mariana Blau, 1996. The letters were written to the child by her Uncle Glen while he was a member of the Army's Tenth Mountain Division from 1943 to 1945. The Club is happy to add this delightful miniature to our collection of wee books, and our thanks to Glen for it.



The Club's associate librarian, Barbara Land, has given The Club an extraordinary and much-wanted book, *Collotype: Being a History-Practicum-Bibliography*, compiled and printed by Steven Chayt and Meryl Chayt – with a dedication to “the newest member of the press,” Eliot, born on March 18, 1983. This elaborate book was printed on a handpress on handmade paper in an edition of only eighty-five copies (ours is number 33) and signed by both compilers. This unusual book covers in some detail all that was then known of collotype and some details of the various processes that stem from this method: photo-gelatin, lichdruck, phototype, albertype, artotype, inkphoto, heliotype, hydrotype – and they add, “etc. etc. etc.” In this book, well illustrated with photos and grammatical drawings, they discuss and list all of the various methods and for-



mulas and add their examples of Nyloprint engravings. This most welcome book is characteristic of the unusual and important volumes that Barbara has given The Club over many years.

As an aside, San Francisco has seen at least three abortive attempts to introduce collotype. The first was Henry Taylor's purchase of material to introduce the method here; but on Henry's death, his brother, Edward Taylor, dropped it. In the 20's, young Bud Carlisle of Carlisle & Co., after an apprenticeship at a plant in Philadelphia, convinced his father to allow him to purchase all the necessary equipment to produce collotype in San Francisco. But after their move to their new large plant, lithography gained great support, and the equipment was sold to Lawton Kennedy. He was interested in photography at that time and thought that collotype would be a great addition to his fine-press printing. Lawton did play with it for a short while, but it never interested his son Alfred. End of collotype in San Francisco.



We have recently received a book to review for the British Library and Oak Knoll Press, a new and revised edition of S. H. Steinberg's famous *Five Hundred Years of Printing*. This was first issued by Penguin in 1955, with two subsequent printings in the following twenty years. This new work has an introduction by John Trevitt, who has brought it up to date with revisions and with over one hundred new contemporary book illustrations. The book is a demi-octavo of over 260 pages and is issued in two formats, a hard-cover with full cloth binding for \$45 and a paperback at \$29.95. This is truly a "must" book for any collector or bookseller, and we thank Oak Knoll Books for sending us a copy. Copies may be had from them (414 Delaware Street, New Castle DE 19720) or through your local bookseller.

— Albert Sperisen



Thanks to members Don and Kathi Fleming, we now have Rookledge's *International Handbook of Type Designers*, which is a nice addition to the part of our collection that deals with type and type design. The book discusses designers and the types they designed in a pleasant and easy-to-use format. We thank the Flemings again for this most useful text.

Thanks to our President, Joanne Sonnichsen, we have just acquired a wonderful bilingual book on cross-structured bindings. This is *Plat Dessus, Plat Dessous*, published in Paris by Claude Blaizot. This relatively new method of binding is fully discussed in both the English and French sections of the book, and examples of all six kinds of structures are illustrated — including a handsome one by Joanne. The book is a wonderful survey of the newest technique in binding, and we thank Joanne and Deke Sonnichsen for the gift.



The Book Club has just acquired *In Praise of Aldus Manutius*, the joint exhibit catalog by the J. Pierpont Morgan Library and U.C.L.A. Department of Special Collections, published in 1995. The book is the account of a remarkable exhibition of the Venetian printer Aldus Manutius. The extraordinary range of items shown at the exhibition, as well as the checklist of the holdings of the Morgan Library, make this item very useful as a reference for Aldus's printings, which include many important humanistic works as well as maps and illustrated works. This is a book of importance for the reference collection of The Club.

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*References Available*

QN-L Editor Emeritus Harlan R. Kessel and his wife, Esther, were visiting in Puerto Rico earlier this year and brought back to us from the Casa del Libro in San Juan a charming and potentially useful small volume, *Libros Españoles, Siglos XV-XVI, Coleccion La Casa del Libro*. The two-color catalog lists fifteenth and sixteenth century books in Spanish on display at the museum at the time when the Kessels visited. The Casa del Libro was established by Elmer Adler, Emeritus Librarian of the Princeton University Libraries; we thank Maria Teresa Arrarás de Colón, Directora, for the gift and the Kessels for transporting it.

— Barbara Land

### Publication Notes:

By the time this issue of QN-L reaches you, we hope, prospectuses for two long-awaited Club books will be in members' hands: *A Widely Cast Net. Selections from the Work of a Veteran California Writer Chosen with Comments by Their Author: Oscar Lewis and The California Gold Rush: A Descriptive Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets Covering the Years 1848-1853* by Gary F. Kurutz. Oscar Lewis, not long before he died, surveyed the work of his long career and chose and arranged these magazine pieces for the former. The book is designed and printed by Susan Acker of the Feathered Serpent Press in an edition of 400 hundred copies; the price is \$90.

Gary Kurutz's monumental bibliography, with an introduction by J.S. Holliday, is printed letterpress by W. Thomas Taylor in an edition of 1,000. The Committee determined on this extraordinary edition because of the scholarly importance of the work and the need to make it more widely available than The Club's usual publications. This compilation consists of 830 pages, with index and illustrations, and the price to Club members is \$110, to non-members, \$150.

Forthcoming books include August Frugé's translation of *A Voyage to California, the Sandwich Islands and Around the World* by Auguste Bernard Duhaut-Cilly, edited by August Frugé and Neal Harlow. Patrick Reagh Printers, now of Sebastopol, is at work on what promises to be an exciting, important, and beautiful volume. Several other books are in various stages of planning, and the Committee will keep members informed of progress in the pages of QN-L. For information on Book Club titles still in print, contact The Club's staff.

— Publication Committee



## *Elected to Membership*

### *New Patron Member*

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### *Sponsor*

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### *New Sustaining Members*

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Michael R. Slater

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Andrew Hoyem

Richard Neil Snyder

Mill Valley

Richard Hilkert

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Jerry C. Cole

Marilyn D. Clarke

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Joanne Sonnichsen

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Mill Valley

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St. Louis MO

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Tamsen T.B. Stevenson, Ph.D.

Glen Ellen

Joan Wheeler Morgan

Jerome Weinstein

Beverly Hills

Kenneth M. Ramseur III

*The following members have transferred from Regular to Sustaining status:*

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San Francisco

Dr. Jack H. Holland

San Jose

Frederica Postman

Los Altos

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OUR NEW CATALOGUE, list 27, will be available by the end of January. It will include a magnificent illuminated manuscript Book of Hours once owned by James Boswell, an illuminated incunable of 1479, and other early printed and illustrated books, a large-paper copy of *Parkinson's Voyage*, the first work in English on Japan with color aquatints, a 17th century black letter Chaucer owned by Burne-Jones, several fine bindings including bindings by Book Club members Peter Fahey, Florence Walter, and Duncan Olmsted, illustrated books from the 18th to the 20th century including several color-printed or pochoir, a unique copy of the Arion Press *Moby Dick* with every woodcut in the book signed by the artist and numerous original drawings for the book, and other fine 20th century illustrated books.

As always there will be lots of books by and about William Blake and his circle. Two lovely paintings by Odilon Redon, and a superb oil painting of Long Island Sound by Kensett are also available. No doubt other additions will be made to the list, so please apply for a complimentary copy if you are not on our regular mailing list.

*And don't forget to come to the California Book Fair in San Francisco on February 21 - 23 at the Concourse at 8th & Brannan. We look forward to seeing you there.*